



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
DRAFT Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

Present: Jennifer Decker, Marty Dumont, Denis Hebert, Julian Long, Marty Pepin, Dave Sandmann, Dennis Shanahan

Absent: Scott Bogle, Arthur Capello, Dan Chartrand, Steve Fournier, Colin Lentz, Maria Stowell, Shelly Winters

Staff: Rad Nichols and Heather Hesse-Stromberg

Guest: Ben Fletcher, Parking Director, City of Portsmouth

I. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM. Introductions of all present were made.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hebert made a motion to accept the March 28, 2018 minutes as presented and Mr. Pepin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols reported that he attended Somersworth's Council meeting to thank them for their recent vote to support a \$17,000 increase in funding to COAST and to let them know the Board would be considering the elimination of the \$0.25 additional fee to board in Somersworth at the April 18th meeting.

Mr. Nichols informed members that Ms. Walker and Ms. Sullivan had announced at their Council meeting on 4/16, that effective October 1, 2018 COAST will be providing all city-supported senior transportation for the City of Portsmouth. These services will be provided through a Shopping Shuttle, expanded advanced reservation demand response service (beyond what ADA will allow for Origin and Destination) and a new Volunteer Driver Program (VDP) to better serve those 62 years of age and older and/or individuals with disabilities.

Ms. Decker praised COAST's new website and noted it is much more user friendly, mobile friendly and the Trip Planner seems much more accurate. Mr. Nichols noted that analytics indicate a 20% increase in use of COAST's website and that 60%-70% of users are mobile users. The most frequented pages are 1) Trip Planner, 2) Route 2, and 3) Career Opportunities. He noted that we are making the move to have all recruitment happen within our website rather than redirecting people to an online recruitment module we had been using through ADP.

IV. Financial Report – No report – March financials not yet ready

Mr. Nichols reported that he and Treasurer Long have established a standing meeting the Monday before each Board Meeting to review financials and make sure Mr. Long has the information he needs as Treasurer.

V. Old Business

Operator Shortage

Over the past three years we have been suffering from a lack of qualified CDL Operators. This is a national shortage and not at all unique to COAST. Mr. Nichols noted that last week COAST announced that it could not continue to staff our full service schedule. WMUR contacted Mr. Nichols within 15 minutes of receiving the Press Release to set up an interview. The story has had a tremendous impact on recruitment as we had 9 applicants the day after the story ran. Some relief is hopefully not too far away. COAST is providing training to help candidates obtain their passenger endorsement or remove their air brake restrictions as needed.

5339 Grant Applications

COAST received an award of \$1.9 million dollars funded by the USDOT/FTA for four replacement heavy duty buses. COAST had previously been awarded CMAQ funds for the purchase of three heavy duty buses and, upon receiving this award, has been asked by the NHDOT to submit a letter indicating that we no longer need the CMAQ funds received for the buses.

The FTA 5339 grant in support of signal prioritization in Dover, covering 19 intersections, has still not been announced through the NHDOT. Applications were submitted in November and an award announcement was anticipated in December. This project's application was for \$307,840 in federal funds.

Tri-City Volunteer Driver Program

Discussions have begun with City officials in Dover, Somersworth and Rochester about the potential Volunteer Driver Program and expectations for a level of community support in the FY20 budget cycle. The goal continues to be to have this program become active (with volunteers providing rides) in the fall of 2018, assuming community leader buy-in and support.

VI. New Business

ACTION ITEMS:

Action Item #1: Acceptance of New Board Member Appointments

At their April 3 meeting, the Berwick Select Board voted to appoint Select Board Chair Thomas Wright as Berwick's representative to the COAST Board of Directors. Mr. Wright has a long history of serving the Town of Berwick as a Maine Legislator, Select Board member and serving in multiple other volunteer capacities on committees and initiatives to help Berwick be the best community it can be.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors accept the appointment of Mr. Thomas Wright to represent Berwick on the COAST Board of Directors.*

Mr. Pepin made the motion to accept the appointment of Mr. Thomas Wright to represent Berwick on the COAST Board of Directors which was seconded by Mr. Long. All voted in favor.

Action Item #2: Approval of NHDOT 5310 Contract

The NHDOT requires COAST's Board of Directors to execute a Certificate of Authority to enable the Executive Director to enter into a contract to receive the 5310 federal funds. Mr. Nichols noted that these funds would be used to support Triplink staff and Mr. Donald's work.

Action Required: *That the Board of Directors authorize the acceptance of funds and the execution of a Certificate of Authority to enable the Executive Director to enter into a contract for said funds with the NHDOT.*

Mr. Long made a motion to authorize the acceptance of funds and the execution of a Certificate of Authority to enable the Executive Director to enter into a contract for the 5310 funds with the NHDOT. Mr. Shanahan seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Committee Reports

None of COAST's Committees have met since the last Board meeting. The Executive Committee will meet before the May Board Meeting.

Mr. Sandmann was asked to clarify the current Committees, membership and purpose.

The Executive Committee is comprised of the Board Officers, and Mr. Bogle as Past Chair. The Executive Committee handles emergencies and other items prior to them coming to the Board.

The Unrestricted Net Assets Committee is an ad hoc committee tasked with defining what COAST's unrestricted net assets level should be. Mr. Bogle, Mr. Fournier and Mr. Long has been working on this issue, with Mr. Nichols and Mr. Ruzinsky.

The Board Development Committee looks at how the Board functions and ways to improve its effectiveness as well as recruiting new Board members. The Board Development committee consists of Ms. Walker, Mr. Pepin and Mr. Sandmann.

The Somersworth Subcommittee was established to look at how to improve the relationship with the City of Somersworth during a challenging funding period. The Somersworth Committee consists of Mr. Pepin, Mr. Lentz, Ms. Walker and Mr. Bogle.

Discussion Items

Discussion Item #1: Elimination of \$0.25 Additional Fee in Somersworth

Based on the good faith efforts of the City of Somersworth to increase their funding to COAST and close nearly 50% of the current funding gap between our request and their projected funding, Mr. Nichols proposes that COAST eliminate the additional fee currently charged to riders boarding the bus in Somersworth.

Mr. Nichols suggested that this be effective April 23, 2018.

Mr. Pepin made a motion to eliminate the additional fee of \$0.25 for riders boarding in Somersworth effective April 23, 2018. The motion was seconded by Ms. Decker.

Mr. Nichols noted that the elimination of the fee would be communicated through a press release (including posting on all COAST social media) and notices on all the buses. Mr. Long

asked about the financial impact and Mr. Nichols noted that he anticipates it will have a positive enough impact on ridership that it will result in no loss of revenue.

Mr. Pepin noted that the additional fee burned a lot of bridges with representatives of the City, so this will help rebuild those relationships. Mr. Dumont reported that the vote to fully fund COAST was a 5-4 vote and one of those opposed has since resigned. Mr. Dumont believes that the new Council representative is supportive of COAST and for fully funding our services. Mr. Dumont also reported that he has been aggressively pushing for COAST to be removed from the pool of funding for Nonprofits and instead be a separate line item in the budget, recognized as a service to the city.

Mr. Nichols provided some historical perspective about how the additional fee came to be. In the mid-2000s the Board formalized policy for working with communities that do not fully fund COAST's requests and identified two possible consequences: 1) service cuts, and 2) an additional fee. Mr. Nichols stated that the intention of the additional fee was that it would cause riders to go to their towns/cities elected officials and advocate for full funding of the service; it was never intended to raise revenue through the farebox.

He noted that over the past ten years the impact of any additional fee has not driven people to advocacy. Mr. Pepin expressed concern that the additional fee ends up hurting people the service is supposed to help.

Mr. Shanahan noted that this historical perspective will be helpful to him in discussions with the City of Dover regarding meeting COAST's funding request. Mr. Long noted that we will want to make sure to follow the same policies going forward should we find ourselves in another situation where a community doesn't fully fund our services.

Mr. Sandmann called for the vote. All voted in favor.

Discussion Item #2: 2020 Service Planning

Mr. Nichols reported that staff have begun to formulate an initial timeline for planning and preparing for the coming changes to fixed-route services due to the end of the Little Bay Bridge mitigation project ending on June 30, 2020. The funding allowed for the reduction of headways all through the day on Routes 2, 40 and 41 and even more service during peak times.

Mr. Nichols noted that this is an excellent opportunity to examine our current services and make changes that will allow COAST to better serve the region going forward.

The timeline was presented in the Board packet. Mr. Nichols noted one additional date of January 2019 when COAST will be challenged with setting the funding requests without really knowing what services will be in place in 2020.

Mr. Nichols noted that, although passengers were informed repeatedly of the service expansions being tied to the Little Bay Bridge construction project and that they would end when the construction ended, it will likely represent quite a change for riders who may have forgotten.

Discussion Item #3: Bylaws Updates

Since the last revision of the bylaws, several potential bylaws changes have been raised for consideration. These include:

- 1) Further defining what we desire for a broad mix of capabilities/characteristics between members of the Board
- 2) Consideration of an appointed representative from a Housing Authority in COAST's service area
- 3) Further definition of the responsibilities around establishing agency policy.

Ms. Hesse-Stromberg presented these topics with recommendations that further definition of capabilities/characteristics of Board members be part of the Board Development Committee's charge rather than articulated in the bylaws. Additionally, she noted the importance of clarification about whether the Board needs to "establish", "approve" or "review and support" agency policy.

Members discussed whether a Housing Authority representative should be specified in the bylaws or whether one of the At Large representatives could be a Housing Authority. Some members were concerned about being too specific regarding individual members and others were concerned that if we articulate with that specificity and then don't fill the seat it means we're not following our bylaws.

Additional concerns involved which Housing Authority would be sought given there are 5 in our service area. Mr. Dumont and Ms. Decker suggested we gather ridership data to get a better sense of which of the four Housing Authorities would be most impacted by COAST. Mr. Dumont also suggested the Board look at a representative from a Food Pantry given the impact transportation has on those utilizing food pantries.

Mr. Hebert made a motion that the Executive Committee strongly consider a representative from a Housing Authority as a member of the Board. Mr. Shanahan seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Sandmann noted the Executive Committee would put together some language for the Board to consider regarding membership and responsibilities around agency policy.

Mr. Dumont left the meeting at 9:45 AM.

Discussion Item #4: Board Self-Assessment

Mr. Sandmann noted that there has not been sufficient response to the Board Self-Assessment for the tool to be very helpful. He requested that everyone complete the Self-Assessment tool by May 1st at the latest and reminded members that the information gathered through the Self-Assessment tool informs how we move forward, grow and continue to be effective in how we operate.

Discussion Item #5: Board Open House

Last fall discussions took place regarding having a Board Open House this spring for Board members to tour the facilities, meet staff, get updates on projects and get a better "feel for the land."

Mr. Sandmann asked if anyone on the Board was willing to help get the event off the ground. Ms. Decker and Mr. Shanahan offered to help. Mr. Sandmann offered to lead the planning.

Ms. Decker noted it would be a great opportunity for the Board to feel more connected to the staff and vice versa.

Mr. Sandmann will work with Ms. Decker and Mr. Shanahan on the details.

VII. Community Updates/Information Items

Auto Liability Insurance

Mr. Nichols announced that COAST has successfully kept auto liability losses low enough to attract a new insurer who wants our business and could potentially save us many thousands of dollars in the near and long term.

No Smoking Signs in Bus Shelters

Mr. Nichols noted that new 'No Smoking' signs (the symbol, so that smoking and vaping are covered) will be posted in the bus shelters. Communities requested these signs so police may take action when they see issues they'd like to address.

Executive Committee Meeting

The COAST Executive Committee will meet sometime in late April or early May to discuss several items related to the Bylaws, strategic objectives, unrestricted reserves goal setting, filling open Board seats and Committee activities. Executive Committee meetings are open to all board members and the public, and all discussion will be reported out at the next full board meeting. All members will be notified of the date and time when set.

Rochester Representative

Mr. Long reported that Mr. Fitzpatrick is retiring on 6/30/18 and Mr. Blaine Cox is taking over as City Manager. Mr. Long anticipates that Mr. Cox will be Rochester's alternate going forward, but he will update the Board when it is official.

Somersworth Support

Mr. Pepin wanted to thank Mr. Dumont for all he's done to advocate for COAST and to acknowledge the positive direction for Somersworth given the two new members are very supportive of COAST.

Portsmouth Parking Shuttle

Mr. Nichols reported that he and Mr. Williams are working with Mr. Fletcher on finalizing the specifics for the Portsmouth Parking Shuttle this upcoming season.

Ridership & Other Performance Measures

Ridership and other performance measures were included in the Board Packet.

VIII. Adjournment

Mr. Hebert made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Pepin. The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 AM.